

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: October 15, 2021

From: Chief Officer, Workforce Management and Consulting (106A)

To: VISN Directors (10N1-10N23)
Medical Center Directors
Chief Human Resource Officers
Chief Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service

Subj: Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP) Application Cycle
New Award Allocations (VIEWS #06133278)

1. The Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP) serves as a significant recruitment and retention tool by securing the services of critical health care professionals for up to five (5) years through student loan payment reimbursement. EDRP awards are eligible for the maximum award amount of \$200,000 as directed by MISSION 2018.

- a. Facilities must identify positions prior to offering EDRP based on hiring challenges through station Hard to Recruit/Retain Lists (HRRL).
- b. Offers of EDRP must be made through the appropriate Human Resources personnel.
- c. EDRP coordinators can be located at [EDRP Coordinators - All Items \(sharepoint.com\)](https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vhaWMCHCM/ELRS/Lists/EDRP%20Coordinators/Allitems.aspx) or copy and paste the full link into your browser:
<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vhaWMCHCM/ELRS/Lists/EDRP%20Coordinators/Allitems.aspx>

2. National funding for direct care positions in the following specialties is authorized for those applicants that are offered EDRP as a recruitment incentive and enter on duty prior to July 30, 2022. EDRP offered for these positions will not count towards station or VISN allocations and will be rendered in addition to regular station allocations. Positions must be notated on station HRRLs and applicants must meet EDRP eligibility requirements (reference attached EDRP Quick Reference and Overview Guide).

Identifier	Specialty/Location
0602/31	Psychiatry Physicians
0602/P1, 21, 49	Primary Care Physicians
0602/25	Gastroenterology Physicians
0602/40	Geriatrics Physicians
0610/Q6	Staff Inpatient CLC Nurses
0610/CY	Geriatric Nurse Practitioners
0610/N1	LTC Nurse Practitioners
0620/14	LTC Practical Nurses

3. Allocations are for new awards approved in FY 2022 and are in addition to the positions noted above. VISNs are responsible for allocating awards to Medical Centers and Clinical Resource Hubs (CRH). Facilities should ensure awards are attached to positions in active

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recruitment as appropriate with sufficient time for application and loan documentation approval to utilize EDRP funding.

Fiscal Year 2022 EDRP New Award Distribution			
VISN	Allocation	VISN	Allocation
1	110	15	81
2	135	16	90
4	80	17	110
5	75	19	111
6	85	20	105
7	120	21	140
8	130	22	130
9	126	23	110
10	97	RCS	35
12	91	Total	1961

*Award allocations are determined by eligible employee population, identified critical staffing needs, vacancy rates and prior year's utilization of funds.

3. Please keep in mind the following points regarding EDRP allocations:
 - a. The projected allocations in the table above are only for new awards and have no impact on current EDRP participants.
 - b. The projected allocations are what each VISN is approved for at the national level to offer in new awards approved in FY 2022. New FY 2022 participants are reimbursed beginning in FY 2023, after service period completion and proof of payment to lenders is verified.
 - c. The maximum award amount is \$200,000 for a full EDRP term of five years. No more than \$40,000 can be awarded in any service period.
 - d. EDRP permits one-time program participation regardless of whether the award is for recruitment or retention.

4. VISNs should proceed with allocating new awards to facilities and clinical resource hubs as applicable. VISN EDRP Coordinators are responsible for monitoring program adherence and for maintaining a tracking system to determine facility, hub and VISN funding utilization.

5. Thank you for your support in administering this program. Please direct questions to vhaedrpprogramsupport@va.gov or Teresa Culpepper at teresa.culpepper@va.gov.



David Perry

EDRP OVERVIEW and QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Fiscal Year (FY) 2022

The Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP) repays qualifying student loan debt up to \$200,000 tax-free for up to five years, or service periods, for individuals in healthcare positions designated as extremely difficult for recruitment and retention by local facilities, VISNS or Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) Vet Centers. No more than \$40,000 may be awarded in any service period.

EDRP is an education loan payment reimbursement program; at the end of each service period, participants receive a reimbursement for the appropriate amount they paid their approved lenders, contingent upon proof of payment.

Award approval and program compliance is centrally managed by the Education Loan Repayment Services (ELRS) team within the VHA Workforce Management and Consulting Office. Award amounts and program approval are determined after a complete application is approved by the ELRS Program Manager as the delegated authority for EDRP management.

- Each EDRP approved entity has locally appointed EDRP coordinators responsible for administration of the EDRP. Use the [EDRP coordinator list](#) to find your local EDRP point of contact.

To qualify for the EDRP, both the *POSITION* and *APPLICANT* must meet specific requirements:

POSITIONS MUST:

- 1) Be clinical or directly impact clinical care
- 2) Be identified on the facility EDRP Hard to Recruit and Retain List
- 3) Have award funding – either national or local funds to cover the award
- 4) Be designated for a valid offer by the HRO or delegated authority (e.g., EDRP coordinator)

APPLICANTS MUST:

- 1) Be appointed to a qualified position with a valid EDRP offer
- 2) Complete application materials and provide supporting documentation of education loan debt as requested. Awards are determined after the applicant submits documentation supporting proof of program eligibility including, but not limited to:
 - ☐ Proof of qualifying loans
 - ☐ Transcripts for the degree qualifying the individual for the position
 - EDRP reimbursements are for the degree which qualified the individual for the position, and does not cover all education
 - ☐ Confirmation of permanent employment status

Note: Once awarded, EDRP is only for the position which the awardee encumbers. Should an individual vacate the position, the award is terminated unless they transfer to another hard to recruit position for which EDRP is offered. In those cases, specific transfer procedures must be followed to continue receiving EDRP. EDRP is a one-time award; previous participants may not reapply. (*Continued next page*)

EDRP OVERVIEW and QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Fiscal Year (FY) 2022

EDRP may be used for both recruitment and retention purposes of direct care providers:

Use of EDRP as a Recruitment Tool:

- Offer of EDRP must be included in either the vacancy announcement or, if a non-competitive hire, included in the commitment letter.
- Applicant submits application and supporting documentation via the Application and Participant Portal (APP) within 4 months of receiving the link to the portal from the EDRP coordinator.

Use of EDRP as a Retention Tool:

- EDRP may be used as a retention incentive at the discretion of the medical center director or program office chief officer or senior leader.
- EDRP may not be offered in conjunction with an existing service agreement, therefore may not be offered in conjunction with another retention incentive.
- The request for consideration must have the endorsement of the supervisor and be vetted and approved by the facility director or designee prior to the individual initiating the application process. VA Form 10017 is used to capture relevant data and is signed and uploaded as part of the application packet.

Funding

Each application cycle, VISNs and the RCS receive national funding allocations for EDRP awards and are responsible for allocating funds to each facility.

Once national funding allocations are exhausted, facilities, VISNs and RCS may locally fund EDRP awards.

- Locally funded EDRP awards must meet all eligibility and qualifying requirements.
- All applications, whether funded nationally or locally, must be reviewed and approved by ELRS.
- Facilities are responsible for the full amount of the EDRP award for locally funded awards, unless noted otherwise by the national program office.

Contact the VHA Workforce Management and Consulting Office Education Loan Repayment Service team at vhaedrpprogramsupport@va.gov for additional information or questions.

References: VHA Handbook 1021.01 and VHA Directive 1021